

Homelessness: 'It's really hard to solve a problem unless you understand it'

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Alan Evans, director of Helping Hands, is worried about what happens when Walmart opens in Warrenton. People are already moving to the area for jobs and are struggling to find places to live, he and others say, adding that many of the jobs they've seen advertised by the retailer are part time and lower wage.

A countywide housing study will illuminate where needs exist and what options are available. At the same time, though, county and city leaders say they know there is a housing crunch and don't expect surprises. While some steps have been taken to encourage housing development, critics say government should be doing more.

Health care and mental health

Like in many rural counties, there are gaps in health care for the poor and scant resources for mental health treatment.

Jarrold Karnofski, the vice president of ancillary and support services at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, has brought up three possibilities at task force meetings: a health van to provide medical services to low-income students, medication-assisted treatment for drug abuse in conjunction with counseling and behavioral therapies, and a drop-in clinic for the homeless.

Amy Baker, the executive

director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, has pointed to a need for a homeless facility that would be open daily and offer a variety of services. Project Homeless Connect, which occurs only once a year, offers a possible model.

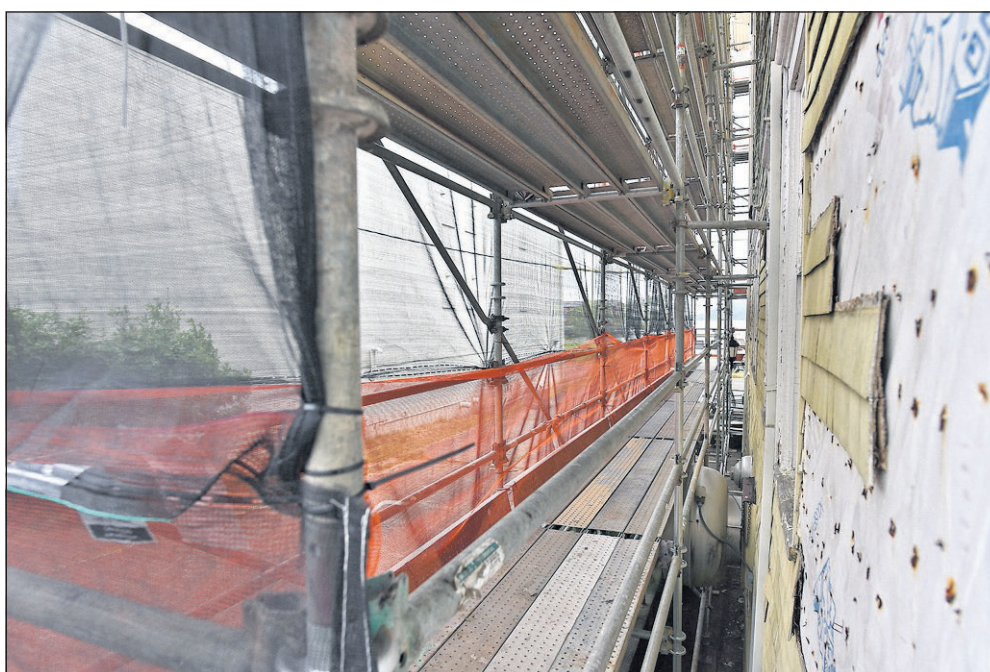
Riverfolk, a nonprofit, has tried to fill one particular gap by focusing on getting the homeless their birth certificates and other identification. Lack of a state-issued identification card, a birth certificate or a driver's license can keep people from landing jobs and getting housing, say Mary Docherty, of Riverfolk, and Elaine Bruce, executive director of Clatsop Community Action.

Root causes

Every story is slightly different.

Some people ended up on the street because of addiction or mental health issues. Others became homeless when medical bills or family circumstances wiped out their savings. Some are fleeing abusive relationships and have nowhere to go. Some just reached the end of their options. Still others call themselves "travelers." The Astoria Warming Center staff said they saw everyone from elderly women to students use the emergency shelter during the winter.

Groups working with the homeless often use different words and phrases to describe the people and situations



Colin Murphy/The Daily Astorian

A building in Uniontown is surrounded by scaffolding prior to the beginning of renovations.

they're addressing. Many of these terms have been up for debate in city and county discussions and can trigger divisions.

Leaders struggle to find succinct, accurate and inclusive language. Planning commissioners working on a proposed code amendment to define emergency warming shelters in Astoria, for instance, were accused by one woman of using bigoted language — charges they emphatically refuted, saying the language they proposed was drawn from policies developed by other cities and organizations. The homelessness

solutions task force has also borrowed language from other cities, from advocates and social-service organizations.

Some draw a line between local homeless and transients, who they see as contributing to issues such as public defecation and urination, public drunkenness, and boisterous behavior that can make business owners and residents feel unsafe.

But some of the people these leaders would describe as "transient" bristle at the term, preferring the words "travelers" or "alternative lifestyle." They aren't here to make trouble, they say, but they want to

live the way they choose.

Perceptions

Representatives of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association and some business owners say the presence of homeless people — especially people who are camping out in doorways, using the sidewalks as a bathroom, or harassing passers-by — is hurting their business.

Astoria police say they often hear a perception that downtown isn't safe. Where perception meets reality is not always clear, Chief Spalding says.

Filling Empty Bellies, a

nonprofit that provides lunch to whoever needs it at Peoples Park, and the Astoria Warming Center, which provides emergency beds to homeless people during the winter, have sometimes been accused of making the city more attractive to the homeless.

Both organizations dispute the characterization, countering that they provide basic services to people in need. Dan Parkison, board chair of the warming center, notes that the center's mission is simple: To make sure people don't die from exposure. Filling Empty Bellies feeds around 20 to 30 people a day.

Similar debates about "a hand out" versus "a hand up" have surfaced in the homelessness solutions task force meetings.

"It's really hard to solve a problem unless you understand it, and I think one of the things that catches people up is: Is homelessness a choice or is it not a choice?" Baker said in May, "... and there's always the question of do we punish it or do we help it?"

People, even the ones who seem lost, want to be a part of a community.

"Whatever our solution is, I think if we accept that this is not whether you're giving a hand out, this is about helping people become contributing members of the community," she said. "That kind of breaks down some of the barriers and reluctance to help."

Wedell: After leaving the 11th Street area, some businesses want him back



Jessi Anderson

John Wedell orders food at the Astoria Coffeehouse and Bistro.

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downtown and no business or property owners are pursuing any formal action to make him leave. Wedell can come and go from the area just like any other citizen.

Wedell, who has split his time between Astoria and Forest Grove for decades, said last week that he left the 11th Street area because he was told he couldn't loiter. He often slept on the street at night, surrounded by his possessions, and then would spend much of the daytime hours on 11th and nearby streets. It is illegal to camp in city limits, but police had not pursued charges against him.

Some businesses want him back.

"He's like family," said Vicki McAfee, owner of A Gypsy's Whimsy on Commercial Street. She would talk to him every day on her way to the shop, and he used to be a regular visitor when she maintained a tea room at a former location.

"He's welcome here as far as I'm concerned," said Scott Lee, a Clatsop County commissioner and owner of Bikes & Beyond, who had been trying to get Wedell to

move back to 11th Street over the past few days. "He's welcome to camp in front of the shop."

Police have fielded approximately 17 calls related to Wedell this year. The calls ranged from a welfare check to complaints that his possessions were clogging up sidewalks or, as on Marine Drive, blocking drivers' views of traffic. He had been told before that he needed to reduce the amount of stuff he was leaving on the sidewalk, often stacked along one side of Godfather's Books at the corner of 11th and Commercial.

The complaints about Wedell's possessions blocking the view of traffic was the first time he or his stuff had risen to the level of a public safety issue, Spalding said.

"Most people know him and like him," Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said. "We know him and like him, but we have to respond to the complaints."

Complicated

Wedell's move, from 11th Street to a lot near a gas station on Marine Drive and away from the heart of downtown, revealed just how com-

plicated discussions around homelessness can become.

When city and county leaders discuss where to focus resources or add services, the intended targets are usually people who are looking to improve their situations: kick addictions, treat medical and mental health issues, find employment, qualify for housing, reunite with family.

For many, Wedell seems to fall into a different category altogether. He has been here for years. He is recognizable, well-known and beloved by many, but he is also generally uninterested in seeking out services or housing.

At a homelessness solutions task force meeting in Astoria in May, Spalding commented that police officers serve all segments of the population. To Spalding, the question becomes: What side of the community or the problem do we listen to? Do officers simply move Wedell along? Are there more creative solutions?

"I think John is the hardest-to-solve problem," replied Sarah Lu Heath, executive director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association.

To members of the Astoria Warming Center board, Wedell illustrates the need for a range of solutions across the "continuum of homelessness." One member commented: "A 'one solution fits all' is going to harm John."

Local hangouts

Wedell said last week he intended to return to downtown at some point.

"I may not be sleeping down there, but I'll go about my daily business," he said.

Godfather's Books and the Astoria Coffeehouse and Bistro, on 11th Street, were two of Wedell's regular spots. He has long been welcome at both, though at times employees have had to remind him to keep his possessions out of the main part of the sidewalk.

This year, Jimbo Defeo, owner of the coffeehouse, also had to ask Wedell not to take over tables in the dining room anymore or bring his stuff inside, but Wedell was still welcome to sit in the lounge area.

Wedell told Defeo he had been sick several times that winter and spring. Defeo said he emailed Wedell's brothers about Wedell's health, but never heard back.

THE DAILY ASTORIAN



TV SCHEDULE

Evening listings THURSDAY

THURSDAY EVENING												JUNE 7		
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30	
2	KATU	(2) KATU News at 6 (N)		Jeopardy! (N)	Wheel Fortune (N)	Celebrity Family Feud		The \$100,000 Pyramid		To Tell the Truth		KATU News (N)	(3:5) Jimmy Kimmel	
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News (N)		Wheel Fortune (N)	Jeopardy! (N)	Celebrity Family Feud		The \$100,000 Pyramid		To Tell the Truth		KOMO 4 News (N)	(3:5) Jimmy Kimmel	
4	KING	(5) (5:00) NHL Hockey Stanley Cup Playoffs Washington vs Vegas (L)		Evening News (N)	Local Lens	Tapping In		Dateline		KING 5 News (N)	(3:5) Tonight Show			
6	KOIN	(6) KOIN Local 6 (N)	Evening News (N)	Extra	Ent. Tonight	Big Bang Theory	Young Sheldon	Mom	Life in Pieces	S.W.A.T. "Source"		KOIN 6 News (N)	(3:5) Colbert	
7	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News (N)	Evening News (N)	KIRO 7 News (N)	KIRO Investigate	Big Bang Theory	Young Sheldon	Mom	Life in Pieces	S.W.A.T. "Source"		KIRO News (N)	(3:5) Colbert	
8	KGW	(8) KGW News at 6:00 p.m. (N)		Tonight Cassidy	Inside Edition	America's Got Talent	Hopeful stars display their talents.			World of Dance		KGW News (N)	(3:5) Tonight Show	
9	KRCW	(3) Modern Family	Modern Family	The Goldbergs		Supernatural "Patience"		Light "Lawanda: The Book of Burial"		News at 10 (N)	Friends	Two and a Half		
10	KOPB	(10) Travels Darley	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour (N)		Oregon Revealed: The Explore the waters of Oregon.		Ken Burns "The War"		An exclusive look at	The Vietnam War.	R. Steves' Tasty		
12	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News (N)		Family Feud	Family Feud	The Four "Week One" Four competitive singers battle it out. (SP) (N)		9 O'Clock News (N)		10 O'Clock News (N)		News (N)	Page Six TV	
13	KPDX	(13) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's News (N)		9 O'Clock News (N)		Family Guy	American Dad!	The Game	The Game	
14	KCPQ	(14) Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	The Four "Week One" Four competitive singers battle it out. (SP) (N)		Q13 NEWS AT 10 (N)		Q13 NEWS AT 10 (N)		News (N)	The Simpsons	
20	TBS	(20) Family Guy	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld Pt. 1 of 2	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Conan (N)		
21	TBZJ	(21) Friends	Friends	Mom	Modern Family	Mom	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9 (N)		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Two and a Half	Two and a Half	
29	ESPN	(29) (4:00) MLB Baseball (L)		SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter With Scott Van Pelt (N)		SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter (N)		
30	ESPN2	(30) (4:00) NCAA Track & Field Division I Championship (L)		WNBA Basketball Seattle Storm at Los Angeles Sparks (L)		Nación ESPN (N)				NFL Live				
31	NICK	(31) The Loud House	The Loud House	The Loud House	Keep it Spottless	To Be Announced				(:05) Full House	(:35) Friends	(:10) Friends	(:45) Friends	
32	DISN	(32) Bizaardvark	Raven's Home	Bunk'd		Andi Mack	Raven's Home	Stuck in Middle	DuckTales	Bizaardvark	Raven's Home	Andi Mack	Bunk'd	
34	FAM	(34) **** The Incredibles ('04) Voices of Holly Hunter, Craig T. Nelson.		Cloak & Dagger "First Light" (P) (N)		(:05) CloakDagger	"Suicide Sprints" (N)			(:05) The Fosters	"Meet the Fosters"	The 700 Club		
35	FMC	(35) (5:00) The 5th Wave		(:20) ** The 5th Wave (2016, Sci-Fi) Zackary Arthur, Nick Robinson, Chloe Grace Moretz.		(:35) FXM Presents				*** Dawn of the Planet of the Apes ('14) Jason Clarke, Gary Oldman.				
38	LIFE	(38) Give Me My Baby (2017, Thriller) Gabriel Hogan, Brooke Hogan, Kelly Sullivan.		Sleepwalking in Suburbia (2017, Drama) Ryan S. Williams, Lucie Guest.		(:05) Cradle Swapping ('17, Dra) Brandon Barash, Patrika Darbo, Amanda Clayton.				Post-game	MarinersPre-game	MLB Baseball Seattle Mariners at Tampa Bay Rays Site: Tropicana Field -- St. Petersburg, Fla.	Post-game	Poker
39	F51	(39) FIFA Soccer International Friendly China vs. United States Site: Rio Tinto Stadium -- Sandy, Utah (L)		Phenoms (N)		MLB Whiparound (L)				TMZ Sports (N)	FIFA Soccer International Friendly Costa Rica vs. England			
43	SPIKE	(43) Mom	Mom	Friends	** Pitch Perfect (2012, Comedy) Brittany Snow, Rebel Wilson, Anna Kendrick.					Amer. Woman (N)	Younger (N)	Lip Sync Battle	Lip Sync Battle	
44	COM	(44) (:15) The Office	(:50) The Office "Turf War"	** The Office	The Office	The Office	Tosh.0	Tosh.0		Tosh.0	Tosh.0	The Daily Show (N)	The Opposition (N)	
45	HIST	(45) Swamp People "Lockjaw"		Swamp People "Speed Demons"		Swamp: Blood "Danger Zone" (N)		Swamp People "United We Stand" (SF) (N)				(:05) Alone (N)		
46	A&E	(46) Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol	Live PD: Patrol (N)	(:35) Live PD (N)	(:05) Live PD: Patrol	(:35) Live PD	
47	TLC	(47) (5:00) 90 Day Fiancé		My 600-lb Life "Henry's Story"		My 600-lb Life: Supersized "Diana and Ashley R." Diana shed 300 pounds. (N)		Ashley R. "Diana shed 300 pounds. (N)		Naked and Afraid XL: Pop-Up Edition		My 600-lb Life "Diana and Ashley R."		
48	DISC	(48) Naked "Thieves in the Night"		XL All Stars "Africa Strikes First"		XL All Stars "Africa Strikes Twice"		XL All Stars "To Hail and Back"		Naked and Afraid XL: Pop-Up Edition		Naked and Afraid "Ashes to Ashes"		
49	NGEO	(49) Dark Secrets of the Lusitania		Drain the Sunken Pirate City		Drain the Titanic				Drain the Oceans: Gulf of Mexico		Wicked Tuna "A Fin and A Prayer"		
50	TNT	(50) NCIS: New Orleans "Second Line"		NCIS:NewOrleans "Collateral Damage"		*** American Gangster (2007, Crime Story) Russell Crowe, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Denzel Washington.				*** The Great Outdoors ('88, Com) John Candy, Stephanie Faracy, Dan Aykroyd.				
51	AMC	(51) (5:30) ** Groundhog Day ('93, Com) Andie MacDowell, Chris Elliott, Bill Murray.		NCIS "Missing"		NCIS "Vanished"		NCIS "The Meat Puzzle"		NCIS "Witness"				
52	USA	(52) NCIS "Dead Man Talking"		Chopped "Cocktail Party"		Chopped "Flavor Savor"				Beat Bobby Flay (N)	Beat Bobby Flay	Beat Bobby Flay	Beat Bobby Flay	
53	FOOD	(53) Beat Bobby Flay	Beat Bobby Flay	Chopped		Chopped				House Hunters (N)	House Hunters (N)	Music City F (P) (N)	House Hunters	
54	HGTV	(54) Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	House Hunters Jr.		Straight Outta Compton		
55	FX	(55) (5:00) Now You See Me 2 ('16) Lizzy Caplan, Woody Harelston, Jesse Eisenberg.		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		Anderson Cooper 360		Cuomo Prime Time		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		
57	CNN	(57) Cuomo Prime Time (L)		The Ingraham Angle		Fox News @ Night		Tucker Carlson Tonight		Hannity		The Ingraham Angle		
61	CNBC	(61) Shark Tank		Jay Leno's Garage "One of a Kind" (N)		Jay Leno's Garage "More Power"		Jay Leno's Garage "Closed Roads"		Jay Leno's Garage "One of a Kind"		Paid Program		
63	BRVM	(63) Southern Charm "Reunion"		Southern Charm "What Da Fuskie"		Southern Charm "Hilton Head-Ache"		Southern Charm (N)		Imposter "See You Soon, Macaroon" (N)		Watch What	Southern Charm	
64	TCA	(64) (5:00) The Wizard of Oz Judy Garland.		*** Top Hat ('35, Musical) Ginger Rogers, Edward Everett Horton, Fred Astaire.		Three Smart Girls (1937, Musical)				(:45) *** Stowaway ('36, Drama) Alice Faye, Shirley Temple.				
65	SYFY	(65) (4:55) G.I. Joe: Retaliation		** Journey to the Center of the Earth ('08) Josh Hutcherson, Brendan Fraser.		** Journey 2: The Mysterious Island ('12) Vanessa Hudgens, Josh Hutcherson.				The Expanse "Intransigence"				
102	RFD	(102) SF Machinery	Small Town	Rural America "Live" "Omaha Steaks"		Steve Lantvit	Rural Eve. News	Market Journal	GA Farm Monitor	SF Machinery	Small Town	Time Life Library		